

AN AGREEMENT WITH THE SIOUX INDIANS, DAKOTA, FOR
A CESSION OF A PART OF THEIR RESERVATION TO THE
UNITED STATES.

JULY 1, 1882.—Committed to the Committee of the Whole House on the state of the Union and ordered to be printed.

Mr. DEERING, from the Committee on Indian Affairs, submitted the following

REPORT:

[To accompany bill H. R. 6503.]

The Committee on Indian Affairs, to whom was referred the bill (H. R. 6503) to provide for making an agreement with the Sioux Indians residing upon the Great Sioux Reservation, in the Territory of Dakota, for a cession of a part of said reservation to the United States, and to define the boundaries of separate reservations for the various tribes of said Indians, have had the same under consideration, and report as follows:

The facts in the case are as follows: We find that the Sioux Reservation is situated in the southern part of the Territory of Dakota and extends across the center of the proposed State of Dakota from the forty-third degree of latitude on the south to the forty-sixth degree on the north, being over 220 miles in length from north to south, and from 160 to 250 miles in width from east to west, having an area of over 34,000 square miles and containing over 21,000,000 acres of land, being larger than the States of South Carolina, Indiana, West Virginia, respectively, and but a trifle smaller than either Kentucky, Ohio, Louisiana, or Maine. This enormous reservation embraces nearly one-half of the proposed State of Dakota. We find the settlements of the Territory within the proposed State to be in the extreme eastern and western portions of it. About 25,000 inhabitants occupy the great mining and agricultural region known as the "Black Hills." This reservation lies between the "Black Hills" settlement and the other settlements, entirely isolating them from the civilized world, cutting them off from railroad facilities, which can only be supplied by opening the reservation to settlement and occupation.

The portion of the Territory lying east of the reservation is already occupied by 150,000 inhabitants, and rapidly augmenting, who have brought into cultivation nearly 2,000,000 acres of lands, organized into districts, townships, and counties, liberally dotted with cities and villages, with 1,100 miles of railroads in active operation penetrating to the very borders of the wilderness embraced in the reservation.

The reservation is occupied by 24,000 Indians, 6,000 males over eighteen, the remainder being women and children. They have under cultivation less than 3,000 acres of this vast tract. These Indians are divided into five tribes or bands residing at five different points, owning the lands in common, and are supported by the government entirely, the country being wholly destitute of game.

The form of the reservation can best be described as an irregular pyramid, with its broad base resting on the southern line of the Territory, bounded on the east by the Missouri River, which carries the south-east corner of the pyramid to the twenty-first degree of longitude; bearing thence west of north, making the eastern line an irregular hypotenuse; the western line being an imaginary line on the twenty-sixth degree of longitude, excepting a niche where the Cheyenne River is made the boundary for a distance of less than 60 miles.

The lands within this reservation on the Missouri River and its tributaries are rich in alluvial, being well covered with dense timber. Reaching the table-lands, on an average of 10 miles from the water-courses, the finest rolling prairies are found, consisting of deep loam with a fine subsoil of porous clay, well supplied with lime, alkalies, acids, marl, and the other fertilizers necessary to produce small grains and grasses in their greatest perfection; the native grasses are luxuriant and afford the finest grazing in the world. It is well watered with perennial springs flowing from the Black Hills through regularly distributed streams to the Missouri, and has a climate unsurpassed in the temperate zone.

The reservation is capable of sustaining a dense population, and if put in the market would be rapidly settled by the same class of industrious and worthy people as those now occupying the civilized portion of the Territory, and immediately traversed by lines of railroads.

In a letter to the chairman of the Indian Committee, dated June 23, 1882, the Secretary of the Interior says:

The quantity of land within the reservations is much greater than is needed for the Indians living thereupon, and in my judgment the reservations should be reduced, and the Indians established on the reserved portion of said reservations best adapted to their wants.

In the opinion of your committee the time has come when this vast reservation should be by some amicable and honorable arrangement limited to the reasonable requirements of the Indians. We believe that it is for the interest of the Indians that each tribe or band should be properly located on a separate and distinct parcel of land or reservation of suitable size and location, and that when so located the land should be patented to the tribe and the settlement made permanent and final. The portion of the present reservation not required for the purpose above stated should be purchased and paid for by the government, the proceeds to be held in trust for the benefit and improvement of the Indians.

Believing that this bill looks to the accomplishment of the above object, we report the same back with amendments and recommend its passage.